

Contributors

PETER BURKE
JAMES W. FERNANDEZ
DON HANDELMAN
EDMUND LEACH
EMIKO OHNUKI-TIERNEY
SHERRY B. ORTNER
JAMES L. PEACOCK
MARSHALL SAHLINS
LEA SHAMGAR-HANDELMAN
VALERIO VALERI

Culture Through Time

Anthropological Approaches

Edited by Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney



STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Stanford, California 1990

4

Enclosures: Boundary Maintenance and Its Representations over Time in Asturian Mountain Villages (Spain)

JAMES W. FERNANDEZ

For when man understands, he extends his mind and takes in the things; but when he does not understand, he makes the things out of himself and becomes them by transforming himself into them.

Vico, *Scienza Nuova*

To the ethnologist the most trifling features of social life are important because they are expressions of historical happenings. They are part of the data from which the past has to be reconstructed.

Franz Boas, "The Aims of Ethnology"

Let us recall that classic Charles Addams cartoon in the *New Yorker* of a New Yorker attending to the battery of locks, dead bolts, bars, and chains that secure his apartment door. At the same moment, surreptitiously, a small white valentine with a red heart is being slipped in beneath the door. Why not begin with this cartoon and its pithy comment both on enclosure and on the modern, or at least urban, condition, so different from the condition of the country men and women I will be discussing here? Our academic canons, however, are not so restrictive as to lock out from consideration such heartfelt, if macabre, little messages. Given only a half-minute of anyone's time the cartoonist has to be a master, as Addams surely is, of the argument of images, the display of symbols. The cartoon is almost all visual, and next to nothing needs to be said. There may be something salutary for us academicians in this, lest we be content in our lucubrations to offer no images at all but rather a skein of abstractions, imageless

ideas.¹ In the rural milieu in which my wife and I have worked, communication is abbreviated and is characterized by such images and symbols as the cartoonist Addams employs.

Locking In and Holding Out

The cartoon image frames appropriately the subject matter of this essay, which has to do with some aspects of the evolution of enclosures in those Asturian mountain villages of northern Spain whose meaning worlds have been the locus of our fieldwork. More particularly it has to do with the changing symbolism over time of some utilitarian instruments and arenas of enclosure: fences and gates and field stones, locks and keys, plazas and portals, high-altitude passes and pastures. Enclosures and the instruments of enclosure are evocative images practically anywhere, one would suppose, to the degree that people are concerned with boundary maintenance and proprietorship. But they need not be symbolic. The focus here will be, as with Vico and Boas, on the conditions that make practical artifacts and arenas, and the signals and signs of coordinated human interaction, into evocative symbols with some historic resonance. I will focus, that is, on the enduring problem of symbol formation, on the historical problem of how things become resonant, pass into history and out of it, and go through phases in doing so.

I will be anchoring this inquiry in several revelatory incidents that arose in our fieldwork or in the archives we consulted. Then I will use these incidents and the concrete symbols characteristic of them to reflect upon symbolization over time.

"The Imponderabilia of Actual Life" and the Attributes of Asturianity

Let me first say something in general about symbols. Symbols as emblems of identity abound in provincial life.² They are the objects

¹Richard Werbner (1985) discusses insightfully the dynamic interplay of images and accepted realities in cultural revitalization, and the responsibility of the anthropologist to the study of images.

²By "emblems" is meant that class of signs standing for or representing a social group that in some way claims to distinguish its identity (in part by means of the em-

or events that occur naturally in Asturias, that are felt to belong to the provincial way of life, and that have thus come to represent it. Such symbols—the apple, cider, the provincial way of pouring cider, the use of butter and lard, the bagpipe, the cow, the bear, provincial dress, provincial dances, the provincial “deepsong” (*asturianadas*), the wooden granaries (*hórreos*), the spiked wooden shoes (*madreñas*), the umbrella, the miner’s lamp, the Virgin of the Sanctuary of Covadonga, etc.—are all characteristic of traditional Asturian lifeways, and their presence is felt to give character to the province, although for some, it is true, in a superficial, stereotypic way. These symbols characterize the province and its personality and contrast it with other, particularly the contiguous, provinces of Spain, whose citizens do not grow apples and drink cider, eat butter, play the bagpipe, sing intense melismatic airs, walk behind cows in spiked wooden shoes, or devote themselves to the Virgin of Covadonga.

Now these emblems are akin to the state birds or trees or flowers of the various states of the American union, which are felt to belong to the state and contrast it with other states. To be sure, many of the “natural” symbols of the American states seem to be constructed or invented and either shared with other states or of questionable local provenance. The Asturian symbols, however, are almost all natural and endemic. That is, a stereotypical Asturian male has the look of a cider drinker, a bagpipe player, a wooden-shoe wearer, a devotee of the Virgin of Covadonga, and stores his grain in wooden granaries. Or put another way, certain objects and actions, indices of the presence of Asturias where they are found, can all become icons of Asturianity. Other Spaniards, or Asturians themselves, being asked to construct an image of the Asturian would likely construct that image out of the attributes I have listed. Indeed, in the popular culture of provincial comics, humorous histories, and monologues, the comic or stage figure of the Asturian is accompanied by many or all of these attributes.

The question arises: How do certain objects and activities come to represent the lifeways and character of a given social group, whether that be a province or a village? Of all the objects and actions present in a given lifeway, how do some come to stand for that life-

blems themselves) from other groups. See the discussion of emblems in Singer 1984: ch. 5. Essentially what lies behind the emblem are matters of intensity of interaction (contiguity) and felt resemblance (iconicity).

way? The answer seems obvious enough. Given competing claims about distinct personality and possessions, such objects and actions are selected because they have the property of contrast: Cider contrasts with the wine drunk elsewhere in Spain; butter contrasts with the olive oil used elsewhere; the cow contrasts with the bull of bull-fights; umbrellas contrast with parasols. These contrasts enable the claim of distinct provincial character. Such objects and actions enable effective boundary maintenance.

A structural answer, the kind of answer that is satisfied with the discovery of a structure of contrasts, will not, however, be sufficient for the argument here. The deeper question is how these particular entities and actions enter into and depart from awareness—enter and leave history, as it were. Malinowski called these objects and actions “the imponderabilia of actual life” (1984: ch. 1),³ and they lie at the very heart of the historical process. How culture or tradition is suddenly brought into consciousness, invented, or discovered is a persistent question in anthropology.⁴ These discoveries, these “historical (or micro historical) happenings” (1940: 632), to use Boas’s phrase, will be probed here. I will do so primarily in a village and not in a provincial context. Needless to say, these resonant entities are incapable of being weighed or evaluated with precision. But anthropologists know by “being there” how vital they are in the human experience.

The Lady of the Keys: The Key as Symbol

Let us, then, ground this inquiry into “enclosures” and raise major questions with a series of incidents that arose in our first month of fieldwork in the mountains of southern Asturias, municipality of Aller, northern Spain. The incidents were attendant to my seeking access to an abandoned and decrepit quarter of a former *casona* (great house) to set up an office. This great house, actually called La

³See especially the discussion in Malinowski 1936, 1: app. 2. “Confessions of Ignorance and Failure,” 2. Method of Collecting Information.

⁴The underlying question of innovation in culture is an old one in anthropology and, between the two world wars, was central to the concerns of both the diffusionists and those interested in acculturation. It has recently come back into focus with a greater sense of the intentionality involved in the “invention of culture” (Wagner 1981) or the “invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

Casona, was located in the neighboring village of El Pino, quite close to our focal village, Felechosa. El Pino was the parish seat, and though now a village much in decline—"muy degenerado," in the villagers' view—it had a history of seigniorial residence. There were four casonas in this village and none in Felechosa, the town in which we were living and an otherwise (though recently) prosperous head-of-the-valley watering spot.

The particular casona in question, in fact all four, had belonged to the family of "los Ordoñez," a seigniorial line dating from the Middle Ages and popularly thought to be linked with the three Ordoños, kings of Asturias and León in the ninth and tenth centuries. Los Ordoñez were those members of the Asturian nobility particularly identified with the municipality of Aller, especially with El Pino. Indeed, the grandee title, count of Ordoñez del Pino, was conceded by Felipe V in 1708 to Lorenzo, a member of another noble family, the Bernaldo de Quirós—one of the most important in Asturias—which was related to the Ordoñez family. El Pino was widely recognized as the seat of several of the main branches of the Asturian nobility. But all this splendor, such as it was, had fallen into a state of disrepair and abandon—"muy degenerado."

In the first half of the nineteenth century los Ordoñez had sold La Casona to the Argüelles, a newly rich Asturian family that was later, at the end of the century, ennobled through a purchased title. The Argüelles had in turn, in the late 1880's or early 1890's, sold the casona and its associated lands to two rich "Indianos," local men who had gone to the New World, the brothers Manuel and Ceferino Díaz Tejón, and who were newly returned with significant wealth from Cuba. The Indianos, unlike the increasingly urbanized aristocracy, still had a rural orientation. The fate of the great house from then on was tied to the vicissitudes of their descendants—their grandnephews and grandnieces—who held the key to that quarter of the house in which I was interested.

The actual key, however, was entrusted to a daughter of a grandniece of the two Indianos. This young woman, Puri (Purificación by name), was married to a miner and thought to have the acumen to deal with strangers. As a great-grandniece, she had little power of decision making herself and had to wait while the four siblings made up their minds. At the same time she found herself acting to calm my growing impatience. It seemed to me that the decision to definitively

pass over the key was unconscionably delayed—over a month—for I had been more or less assured of the availability of the rooms. That these quarters were otherwise useless, or appeared so, that my stay would only be temporary, and that the rent offered was generous argued for a quick decision. But one was not forthcoming. Since I was anxious to install my boxed books, I made frequent inquiries.

Inevitably, there being no other news to report, we—that is, Puri and I—began to focus upon the key itself as a symbol of these prolonged and increasingly awkward proceedings. Essentially a delegate of her elders, Puri had little material interest in the matter and, discomfited by the delay in her relatives' decision, became increasingly aware of *my* discomfiture. No doubt my research timetable made me more importunate than any Asturian would have been under the circumstances. Puri began to feel embarrassed about her control of the key and let me know on several occasions that as far as she was concerned, it was my key already: "Just be patient."

The key became, therefore, the object of a playful and inevitably gendered interchange of male need and female resistance. Nothing overtly boisterous or bawdy was said, since the interchange was between generations, between social classes, and between near strangers. There was just a sly recognition that something more than the use of a house could be in negotiation in such a situation. And there was perhaps the recognition that, as has often been argued for domestic space in Spain, the house is female in character (in contrast to the street)⁵—a female dispensation to be properly opened only to authorized males. As frequently happens, the situation became one of those in which some practical activity or object becomes decontextualized and removed from its normal routine and associations. It becomes transformed and weighted with untoward meanings. Like

⁵This association is plentifully represented in the proverb corpus. In mild form it begins with the house requirement of every newly married woman: "la que se casa a su casa" (she who marries straightaway to her house). But it continues in stronger form: "La mujer casada. La pierna quebrada y en casa" (The married woman with a broken leg and in her house). The woman, as administrator, controls the house as hers and, in fact, without her it is nothing: "Casa sin mujer, cuerpo sin alma" (House without a woman, body without a soul). The outside/inside, street/house identification is part of the association: "El hombre en la plaza y la mujer en casa" (Men in the plaza and women in the house). And of course there is the identification between the woman's body, particularly the private parts, and her house. See Cela 1971, 1: 769. See also Fernandez 1985.

any sign or signal out of place, it becomes a symbol (see Fernandez 1985).

If the key was developing these “primary process” meanings between Puri and me, it may well have had a more lofty significance for her. She may have been aware that keys figure prominently on the coat of arms of the marquesses of Camposagrado, prominent property-holders in Aller, a branch of whose family had built a hunting lodge (now fallen in) in her own village of Felechosa in the first decade of the present century. Their coat of arms had been displayed there, and the noble family was otherwise well known to the villagers.

The Camposagrados were a branch of the Bernaldo de Quirós family (also related to los Ordoñez), and theirs was one of the few Asturian coats of arms to carry keys as heraldic bearings.⁶ These were the keys of St. Peter and recalled the contribution of the house of Quirós to the papacy in the triumphant battles of Pope Stephen III against the Lombards in the eighth century, which led to the establishment of the Papal States. This seems to be an apochryphal reference, for the house of Quirós is late medieval rather than early medieval in origin. Nevertheless, the referent of the keys—that as Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven and earth to Peter, so the Quirós were among those who gave the keys of his earthly kingdom to the Pope—is in its overweening pride perfectly compatible with the motto of this family: “Después de Dios la casa de Quirós” (After God comes the house of Quirós). (See Figs. 4.1 and 4.2.)

Puri would not have been aware of all this history bound up in heraldic symbolism. She would just have been aware that keys were, in some way, seignorial attributes—they figured on coats of arms—and means of access to a special dispensation that was not to be taken lightly, whatever playful meanings might emerge. The dispensation was of course that which the rich Indianos might have aspired to have access to when they purchased La Casona. Just as Christ’s handing of the keys over to Peter is usually read as a symbolic representation of Peter’s coming into the New or Christian Dispensation, so the granting of the key by Puri and her family represented for them, in

⁶Keys are unusual in Asturian heraldry and are primarily associated with the house of Quirós. Sarandeses 1966, the standard reference, lists and pictures 1,783 coats of arms. Of those, 54 carry keys as heraldic bearings; 32 of the 54 are directly associated with the house of Quirós: 19 belong to the house of Quirós proper, and 13 to family offshoots.

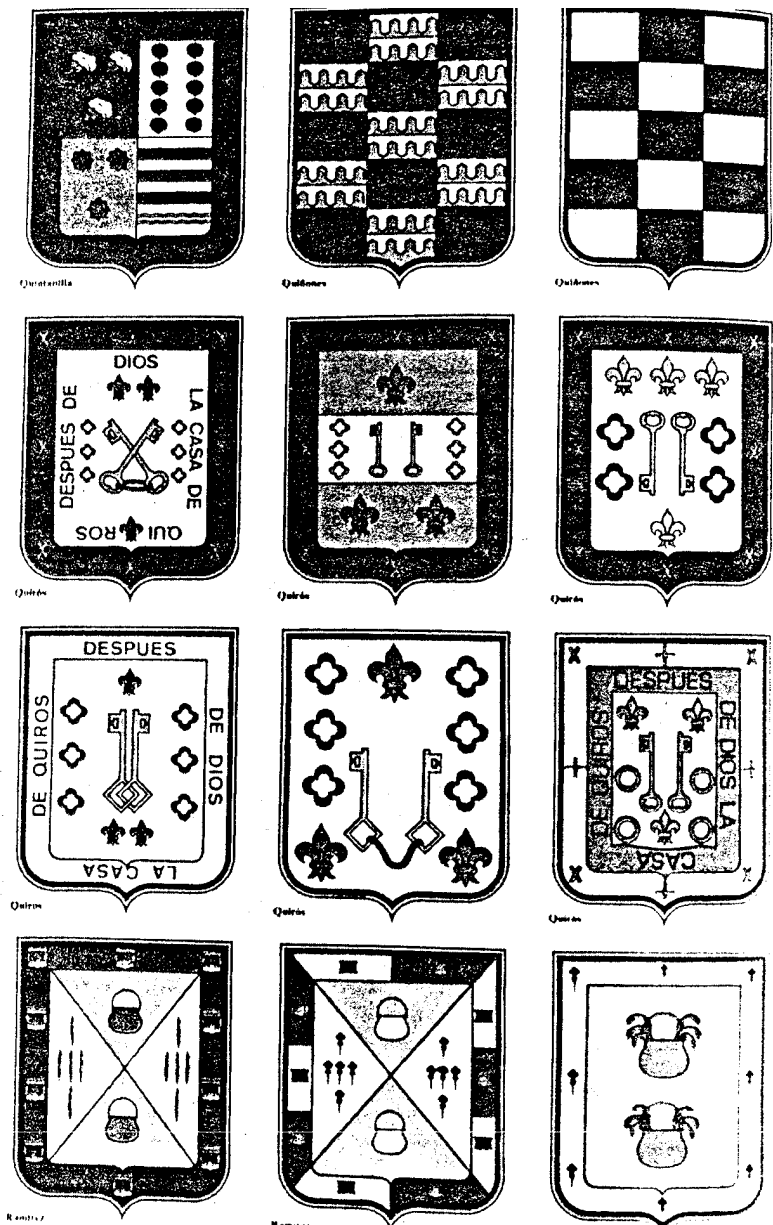


Fig. 4.1. Coats of arms of the house of Quirós (middle two rows).

analysis might put it,⁷ or access to a special historical dispensation. But while the key came to have something of that complex significance in my relationship with Puri, a focus upon meanings, archetypically analytic or purely historical and thus transcendent, takes us away from the changing meaning of the key and other instruments of enclosure in my particular circumstances and the circumstances of Asturian society and culture. Rather than confirming an archetype by such transcendence, it is upon the vicissitudes of this present symbol that I wish to concentrate. I wish to see the Casona key in the social context of the house itself and its succession of proprietors—once noble but now rural proletarians, that is, miners and country people. Needed here is the kinship chart mapped upon the ownership of the house (Fig. 4-3).

Degenerated Symbolic Structures: The House as Symbol

In our visits to the desired quarters Puri referred to the house several times, with some chagrin and quite expressively, as “muy de-

⁷Carl Jung (1956: 124–25) evokes a passage from Goethe's *Faust*: “The phallus also working in darkness begets a living being; and the key unlocks the mysterious forbidden door behind which some wonderful thing awaits discovery.” One thinks in this connection of “The Mothers” in *Faust*:

Mephistopheles. Congratulations, before you part from me!
You know the devil that is plain to see. Here, take this key.

Faust. This little thing! But why?

Mephistopheles. First grasp it; it is nothing to decry.

Faust. It glows, it shines, increases in my hand!

Mephistopheles. How great its worth you soon shall understand.

The key shall smell the right place from all others:

Follow it down; it leads you to the Mothers!” (Goethe 1951: 177)

Sigmund Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, gives approximately the same reading to keys (1965: 389–90) and refers the reader to Dora's first dream, in which her mother locks the dining room of their house against her father and then gives the key to Dora to lock her own bedroom door (1963: 81–85).

More apposite would be evidence from Spanish culture. See here Camilio José Cela's two compendiums of erotica (1971, 1982), particularly his *Diccionario Secreto*, where, among other references, he makes mention of a cartoon from a 1912 Madrid demimonde magazine picturing a man and woman before a door that the man is intent on opening: “But my good man,” the woman remarks, “every night you have the same problem with the key, you never succeed in inserting it!” (1971, 2: 421). Joan Frigole Reixach (“La casa y el espacio doméstico tradicional y su sistema de representaciones,” unpub. ms., 1986) gives a Murcian song-verse collected by P. Díaz Cassou (1980, 143): “Quien se fia de mujeres / d'este mundo poco sabe; / no hay que fiar de una puerta / que tos tenemos la llave!” (Who puts faith in women / Knows little of the world; / Put no trust in a door / To which everyone has a key!).

generada,” a phrase that occurred with some frequency in conversations with the Asturian villagers in the early stages of our acquaintance, when they were evaluating my reiterated intention to study authentic Asturian culture in the high mountain valley. The quarter of the house I was interested in was certainly decrepit. But more than that seemed to be involved in her remark. The chart shows some reason for it. What was in the eighteenth century and earlier just one of the four great houses in the village belonging to the Ordoñez family had become by the mid-twentieth century a house divided into three parts belonging to three different families only distantly related, if related at all. The casona had degenerated into a house with three small apartments and with the possibility of a fourth. The same thing had happened to the other great houses of the village.

For the rural aristocracy the building of casonas had symbolized family greatness (cf. Lisón Tolosana 1973). It is not surprising that, in comparison, country men and women like Puri found the breakdown of the casonas into parts, and of family perpetuity into family squabbling, to be a symbol of degeneration: An undisputed great house had become a disputed apartment house. Let us address the inheritance disputes which resonated in La Casona in the twentieth century and which were part of Puri's sense of degeneration—of the inability of her class of country people to maintain the seignorial status of the house.

We know first that the truly ancient line of rural aristocrats associated with El Pino, los Ordoñez, sold the casona and its lands in the early nineteenth century to a newly wealthy, eventually to be ennobled, family of industrialists, the Argüelles. The Argüelles, in turn, more oriented to the city than to country seats, like most of the nineteenth-century aristocracy, sold the house and lands to the returned Indianos, the villagers Manuel and Ceferino Díaz Tejón, around 1890. Manuel died in 1893, and his half of the casona passed to his brother, who in turn passed this half in usufruct (*llevarza*) to his married younger sister Severina. When Ceferino died in 1923, Severina gained full title to that half, while her unmarried older sister, María, inherited lifetime usufruct to the other half. The two sisters seem to have disputed this inheritance arrangement. (The sister Teresa was mentally impaired and not involved in these matters.) In any event, on María's death in the early 1930's full possession passed to Severina and her descendants. It was the degeneration into disputes

between these descendants that dissipated the seignorial equanimity and self-control that a *casona* should manifest.

Upon Severina's death, her three children, Ignacio, Carmina, and Germana, inherited the house, now divided into three parts. Already, this arrangement had engendered some disputes because Germana's share (the quarters I was interested in), though slightly smaller in living space, also comprised the stable, hayloft, and chicken yard. Although the principle of partible inheritance should have applied, the three children were somewhat unhappy about the division of the house. As it happened, Ignacio quickly sold his third to his paternal aunt, Luz Fidalgo, to satisfy a debt. He later had second thoughts about the equity of this transfer and attempted to reclaim his portion of the house. But his aunt resisted the claim and sold her third in the 1950's to Rogélio González Castañón, the present proprietor. The dispute between Ignacio and his aunt is remembered whenever the *Casona* is talked about.

The part of the house in which I was interested, Germana's share, and the other third passed from Carmina and Germana, each of whom had four children, to those children without sale. The children of Carmina, then living in a downriver town, rapidly went to *suertes*, a drawing of equal parts, to resolve the inheritance. Their *Casona* part went to Leonore, who sold it forthwith to José Lillo of El Pino, a distant relative, the present occupant. The division of Germana's inheritance—she died more recently in any case—was not easily resolved, so her portion was held without going to *suertes*, in part because two of the siblings were *sub normales*. One was something of an *inocente*, and the other an unmarried woman of promiscuous lifestyle with two children born out of wedlock.

The indeterminate nature of Germana's inheritance, which comprised lands as well as a third of the *casona*, posed the difficulty in respect to my rental offer. It raised the question of the need to go to *suertes*. Also, while my rental monies could be divided four ways, my residence posed a problem for Ignacio's daughter, María, who was marrying a miner and envisioned eventually setting up house in that third of the *casona*. She and her father wanted to be sure that my stay would not last longer than a year and a half, as promised. And they wanted to be sure a precedent was not established that would prevent her buying out her aunts and uncles, or a specific aunt or uncle,

if they decided to go to *suertes* and the house fell to other than her father.

Thus the *casona*, or that part of it in negotiation, came to symbolize all these inheritance disputes, and a degeneration into disputatiousness in place of seignorial equanimity, although the family had attempted to maintain this equanimity and mastery in the face of the constant potential for squabbling over inheritance. Puri's feelings of degeneration arose in part because of the high value placed on those qualities, because of a sense that things might have been managed better, as, for example, in the marriage of her grandmother, Germana, and grandaunt, Carmina, to two brothers, António Gutiérrez Prieto and Jesús Gutiérrez Prieto. This marriage of brothers and sisters, *casarse a trueque* in the Asturian phrase, was understood, whatever other natural attractions of courtship might bring it about, to be a way of avoiding the dispersion of family lands and possessions and maintaining equanimity and mastery of the temporal vicissitudes of inheritance. A family that had practiced *casarse a trueque* in the generation immediately antecedent to the presently disputing generation was likely to feel the divisive degeneration of family affairs the more strongly, as Puri apparently did.

Now let me tie these family matters and the symbolism of the seignorial house into the question of enclosure. The coats of arms that the *casonas* regularly carried and that all of the *casonas* in El Pino once carried were the discrete signs placed upon them to symbolize family greatness, understood as perpetuity, equanimity, possessions, abundance of descendants, influence, and so forth. The coats of arms were signs upon the house indicating an enclosure of these qualities in family form. The house was a symbol of these family qualities and at the same time a literal enclosure of them. But the *casona* I was negotiating for had become a hollow shell enclosing family decline through alienation of resources and perpetual squabbling over inheritance. Puri, like many villagers, was acutely aware of how the great house had changed its meaning over time. And while the former seignorial occupants might themselves have undergone a similar decline into fractiousness, as far as Puri was concerned, the great houses, which should have been enclosures of great families, had become enclosures of degenerated families. The house as symbol had changed so over time.

The Ambiguous Boundaries of House and Field as Symbols: The *Antoxanu*

The key and the house to which it gives entrance, we have seen, are changing symbols. The privacy they give access to has changed, in local views, from something full of promise and possibility to something fraught with the dispute and distrust of inheritance. Though I have made this case for a *casona*, it is also true of most villagers' houses where partible inheritance obtains, as is typical of most parts of Asturias. It is likewise true that villagers thinking upon the past, even though they have no *casona* in the family, romanticize that past, believing that once their family was united but now it has fallen into rancorous dispute. Access to a house, therefore, is often access to a knowledge of that debilitating family discord. Part of the resistance to giving out a key is a resistance to giving a stranger access to disagreeable facts about the family romance—the dirty linen. But let us turn from the maintenance or defense of boundaries against such private facts becoming public knowledge to one aspect of the negotiation of house boundaries negotiated vis-à-vis the neighborhood (*vecindad*).

In reading through municipal archives, particularly the proceedings of the municipal council, one notes the frequency with which one householder denounces another or the community denounces a household for infringement of a neighbor's property or a public right-of-way.⁸ Within the village these denunciations have largely to do with the space lying before the house, the dooryard, known as the *antojana* or *antoxanu* (Fig. 4.4). This rectangular space, partially confined by the house walls, which extend to sustain the second story and upper porch, and partially protruding several meters beyond the walls, is the arena of negotiation between private and public property and is correspondingly a potentially symbolically evocative arena. It is a symbol that has also undergone, in the villagers' view, a transformation: Villager and municipal functionary alike often lament how much more people dispute over this space these days than formerly. What is, in part, symbolized when the *antoxanu* is brought into

⁸In the *Aller Libro de Actas* for March 7, 1936 (24: 50), for example, is an order that María Lobo of Casomera retire from the public way her woodpile, which was exceeding the limits of her "antoxu."

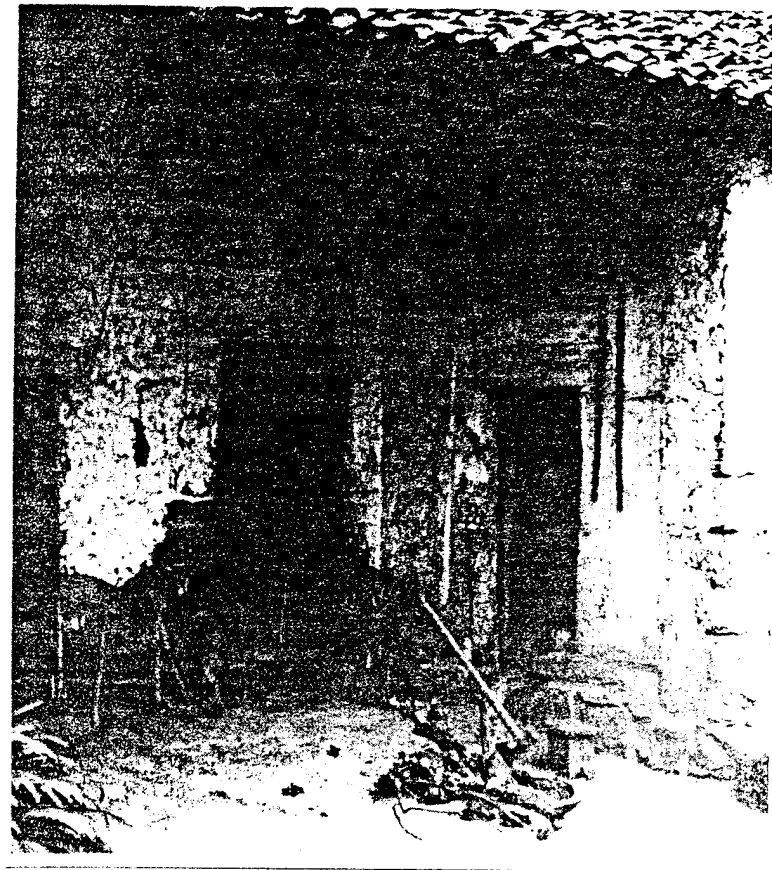


Fig. 4.4. Dooryard, or *antoxanu*.

discussion is loss of moral community and cooperative neighborliness, *vecindad*.

The *antoxanu* has long been a contentious arena in Asturian village life, belying present views that litigation of this century symbolizes loss of community. Obligations vis-à-vis the treatment of this space are explicitly stated in the village ordinances drawn up in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, before village and parochial administration was displaced by more centralized municipal

government in the mid-nineteenth century.⁹ Changes in provincial and village life have, however, made this space more subject to symbolization, which is to say a center of contention. Let us review each of these pressures with an eye toward their effect on the symbolization of the antoxanu.

First, houses have tended to conglomerate in settlements, contravening an older and still widespread pattern in many parts of Asturias of living in separated or isolated farmsteads, *quintanas* or *caseríos*. In this increasing conglomeration—although, to be sure, a pattern dating back to the Middle Ages¹⁰ in many parts of Asturias, such as Aller—friction as regards the antoxanu has intensified, and personal and house identity and neighborhood rights have become bound up in this liminal space.

Second, with the establishment of effective municipal government in the nineteenth century, control over these public-private spaces, as well as over practically all aspects of village life, has shifted from local village government, the Parochial and Neighborhood Councils, *Junta Vecinales*, to municipal councils in other towns.¹¹ This shift induced a greater abuse of this space since the supervisory authorities were now much removed and litigation was likely to be lengthy and impersonal rather than immediate and among neighbors. This distancing and prolongation of dispute acted to symbolize the antoxanu

⁹See the Ordenanzas of the village of Bello as discussed by R. Prieto Bances (1977, 1: 413). Prieto Bances is making use of the Ordenanzas collected by the secretary of the municipality of Aller, Benjamin García Álvarez. See the Ordenanzas of the town of Bello (1846): "Ningún vecino podrá abreviar los caminos o calles del pueblo con maderas ni otras cosas dejando tres baras libres sin embarazo alguno. Así mismo tendrá sus antojanos limpios y despedregados cortadas las canas de los árboles que impedian las procesiones y otras cualesquiera cosas y el que faltare a esto el regidor la castigara en dos reales por la primera y después doblando" (No citizen can intrude upon the alleys or streets of the town with wood or other material and must leave three yards clear for passage without any impediment. In the same fashion one must maintain one's courtyard clean and smooth, with tree branches cut that might impede public passage and other related impediments whatever removed, and he who fails at this the supervisor will punish with fines of two reales for the first offense and thereafter double [García Álvarez 1963: 212]).

¹⁰The impetus toward this settlement pattern in some parts of Asturias in the Middle Ages is well examined in Ruiz de la Peña 1981.

¹¹In the north of Spain, in contrast to the center and south, municipalities are made up of a number of parishes, each composed of several villages. The municipality of Aller is made up of 17 different towns and villages. There is considerable competition between them, and the municipal seat cannot easily represent them all equally.

in two ways. The surfeit of antoxanu complaints in municipal councils in twentieth-century meetings and the onerousness of attending to them caused administrators to look upon the complaints as representative of the rancor of village life and the failure of neighborliness that characterized it. Municipal secretaries and other functionaries drew my attention to these complaints as something that would give insight into what village life was all about. For the villagers themselves the delay in attending to their complaints, coupled with the challenging necessity of presenting these complaints in legal form to the municipal government, clothed the complaints with transcendent meanings associated with frustrated waiting for resolution on the one hand and the willfulness and unpredictability of bureaucracy on the other. Normal everyday things bound up in frustrating and unpredictable situations became, as we have seen, symbolic by such associations.

Third, with the increasing affluence of the countryside in the last two decades the antoxanu has become a depository of more goods than it can easily accommodate without infringements on others' spaces. This affluence, in other words, has given the antoxanu a spill-over effect on the public right-of-way and adjacent property. Where disputes about the antoxanu were formerly confined to the overflow of woodpiles and manure piles at its two edges, in recent decades its use for tractors and automobiles, and, even more, the attempt to fence it in for such purposes, has been a main cause of complaint. The litigation provoked has become so widespread that provincial lawyers now dedicate themselves to the complicated legal status of this space and its relationship to the house and to its neighborhood (in particular the *corrala*), as well as its divisibility and inheritability independent of the house (Fonseca González 1984).

Fourth, the percentage of houses held in rent within seignorial estates has declined. Problems of the antoxanu that were once problems to be referred for resolution to the local administrators of these large estates have become problems of the homeowners themselves. This is just the inverse of the problem of the increase, at the village level, of municipal authority at the expense of village authority.

Last, there has been that change within which all these other changes have taken place: the steady movement in Asturian life, as in Western Europe generally, toward privatization of the public

and communal. This has affected not only land but these house-associated properties as well.

Although the antoxanu has long been of concern in village life and is manifest in village ordinances of the eighteenth century, the creation of municipal administration removed these disputes from direct resolution by fellow villagers to municipal councils, few members of which were local villagers or even members of the same parish. The antoxanu, then, for a complex of reasons has come to represent that space in which private and public are negotiated and that space in which the private, the casa, is likely to intrude on the most immediate public space, the plaza of the quarter, or corrala.

La Portietsa

If Asturians of these valleys think the antoxanu symbolizes the rancorous and proprietary spirit that has come to dominate village life, they are plentifully aware of the same dominating spirit in their agricultural and pastoral life in the fields and meadows. Here are two revelatory incidents from municipal and provincial archives. The first is selected from a long series of documents (Fig. 4.5) from the provincial notarial archives of 1776 to 1778 concerning the opening and closing of a field gate, *portilla* or *portietsa* in the local dialect.¹² One Andrés Muñiz Santos seeks to enjoin some of his fellow villagers and the village officials, to desist from their lax ways in both closing one of these gates too early in June and opening it too late in the fall. What is in contest here is *derrota*, the communal right of pasturage over stubble after fall harvest and until spring planting. The plaintiff is resisting a tendency in his fellow villagers to expand their private rights over against the public rights of stubble grazing. The plaintiff's cattle had been seized (*prindado*) against costs for infringement of private property, and in any case he had been impeded in his and the public's right of passing through to pasturage. In the document on display the judge gives reason to Muñiz Santos's complaint.

A similar case, although advanced by a plaintiff with a different perspective, appears nearly two centuries later, in the municipal ar-

¹²This extended litigation can be found in the Archivo Histórico Provincial, Oviedo, in the notarial records, Box 1001, 1770-80, compiled by the notary Francisco Javier González. See particularly the records for 1778.

chives for 1958 from the neighboring upper-valley village of Villar de Casomera.¹³ This time the secretary of the municipality, in response to villagers' complaints, writes to one Doña Rogelia Lobo Baizán requesting that she remove all the fruits of her field, Finca Orana, before November 1 and open the gate so that the field will be available for stubble grazing by village cattle. She replies as an aggrieved plaintiff before the court citing various twentieth-century laws that permit her to keep her fields closed to stubble grazing. Besides, she adds, the Asturian climate, particularly the weather of 1958, has prevented full harvesting of her corn, beans, and beets before November 1. She should be due, she argues, some compensation for opening her fields and losing some of those crops. The matter comes before the municipal council in 1958.¹⁴ The municipal secretary provides a white paper on *jus fruendi* recommending that the municipality should defend this immemorial right in this case. The barrio mayor of Villar, *alcalde pedaneo*, also presents testimony arguing that all the citizens of the village have enjoyed stubble-grazing rights (*segundo pelo* or *toñá*) on this land as an ancient custom and that such rights should continue to be respected with no monetary obligation to villagers. The council supports both the secretary and their *alcalde pedaneo*.

In both these cases the authorities sought to uphold communal rights over privatization. But in both cases litigation continued. And despite these particular rulings, the massive historical shift in the last two centuries has been toward increasing privatization and the loss of stubble-grazing rights. In the central part of Asturias this old right of *derrota* has almost disappeared, but in the eastern part of Asturias large stretches of land privately held in plots (sometimes for planting and harvesting but mainly for haymaking), yet subject to communal usufruct, are still present although the area involved is in decline. The negotiations of many centuries of the communal and the private are still going on there (see Fernandez 1981).

But the purpose here is to focus on the field gate, *portietsa*, itself the focus of the disputes, as their symbol. These legal documents are in fact sometimes termed "the affair of the gate." While the gate might be, as an instrument of boundary maintenance, symbolic in itself in

¹³Libro de Actos, Ayuntamiento de Aller, Asuntos Especiales, Caja 1860, Asunto 26.

¹⁴Ibid.

any context, the historical context examined here of the struggle over the communal and the private has become a crucial part of its meaning. The great Western European shift toward agrarian individualism is symbolized in it. Villagers frequently went out of their way to call our attention—the attention of these strangers seeking to learn about Asturian life—to the portietsa. In these upper valleys the gate is usually a light and skillfully woven barrier of hazel branches, but its easy movability contrasts humorously and perhaps defiantly in villagers' minds with the embittered struggle that has gone on over the centuries, mostly downvalley and among bureaucrats, over its permanent emplacement—the attempt to make of it something heavy that could not be easily moved. Some villagers have eagerly sought, others have acquiesced in, that privatization. Still, they seemed to recognize the field gate as embodying historical struggle and historical change—the passage from one dispensation, one moral community, one "moral economy," to another. To say that it carries that import is not to deny its libidinal qualities as well (cf. Fernandez 1975).

Los Puertos: Property and Pasturage in the Mountain Passes

The final symbolic arena I wish to examine is the public pasturage in the mountain passes, *los puertos*, between Asturias and León. Three revelatory documents disclose the vicissitudes of this high-altitude pasturage and what it represents to villagers. Indeed, claims and rights over these passes have been a central preoccupation of upper-valley life for centuries. Many upland fights between parishes over pasturage are recalled in local life histories.

Two documents demonstrate the perdurance of these disputes. The first (Fig. 4.6) comes from the archives of los Condes de Luna, an old Leonese noble family, dated February 1, 1530. In this, the king, Carlos I, enjoins the municipal officials and citizens (*vecinos*) of Caso to appear at the royal audience sitting in Valladolid to appeal their complaint against the Conde de Luna, Claudio Fernández de Quiñones, in respect to his claim over the Puerto de San Isidro, the mountain pass lying between León and the municipalities of Caso and Aller in Asturias. The citizens of Caso are claiming their ancient pasturage rights in the puerto over against the seigniorial claim of the Conde de Luna. Their claim that the puerto depends directly upon the king, is re-

Yo el Rey
Yo el Conde
Yo el pueblo de Pelechosa

Fig. 4.5 (left). *La portilla*, a complaint by Andrés Muñoz against Toribio and Bartolomeo Muñoz concerning their closing of a gate to the free passage of cattle.

Fig. 4.6 (lower left). Invitation from Carlos I to the citizens of Caso to appeal their claim to Puerto de San Isidro, dated February 1, 1530.

Fig. 4.7 (lower right). Agreement between the villages of Felechosa, in Aller, and Calcao, in Caso, to close their pastures near the Puerto de San Isidro for revegetation, dated April 10, 1984.

Realizada en la Casa Consistorial de Pola de Llerena, a las doce horas del día diez de abril de mil novecientos ochenta y cuatro, de una parte el Sr. Alcalde del Ayuntamiento de Aller y el representante del pueblo de Pelechosa en dicho concejo, y de la otra el Sr. Alcalde del Ayuntamiento de Caso y el Presidente de la Entidad Local Menor de Calcao (Caso),

ACUERDO:

Que ambas partes, Ayuntamiento de Aller y pueblo de Pelechosa, Ayuntamiento de Caso y E.L.M. de Calcao, manifiestan en conformidad de lo que se lleva a efecto el cierre de los puertos lindantes de ambos concejos, pertenecientes a los parroquias de Pelechosa y Calcao, por el lapso trienal para la conservación de la Sotabalsa (S.O.P.A.), renunciando al Jefe de Dársela vigente del Instituto Geográfico y Catastral, de fecha 9 de septiembre de 1961.

Por el Sr. de ALLER
El Sr. Alcalde.
Don: Gabriel Pérez Villalba

Por el Sr. de CASO
El Sr. Alcalde.
Don: Juan Manuel Estrada Alvará

Juan M. Gallo

Por el pueblo de Pelechosa con la condición de que la apertura de cierre se lleve a efecto con presencia de los representantes del pueblo de Pelechosa para dar fe de que se ajusta al Real Decreto de 1961.

Por el pueblo de Calcao
El Pta. de la E.L.M.
Don: Juan Manuel Gallo

José Fernández Rodríguez

alengo, and not a seignorial dependency. Though the citizens of Aller, and in particular the parish of El Pino, do not appear together with Caso in this petition, they surely shared the same attitude toward their ancient rights over pasturage in this puerto.

The other document (Fig. 4.7), from 1984, is an agreement between the villages of Felechosa, in Aller, and Caleáo, in Caso, to temporarily close their mountain pastures adjacent to the Puerto de San Isidro for revegetation. In effect, it is a reestablishment of the pasturage boundaries between these two villages, for in the previous several years they had been in dispute about pasturage. Thus the agreement is accompanied by the delimitation agreement of 1941, Acta de Deslinde, which established the field markers, *moyones*, between the two villages by actual visitation. Several of these stones also mark the limits, in the Puerto de San Isidro, between Asturias and León, so this document addresses the same contested area as the document from 1530.

Rights over high mountain pasturage in Puerto de San Isidro have thus been periodically in dispute for at least four and a half centuries. Since the use of the puertos for summer pasturage seems to have been a practice since Celtic times and even before, in the first and second millennia B.C., no doubt these disputes are much more ancient. But in the last four centuries municipalities have struggled against seignorial claims by seeking direct dependency upon the king. For the monarch, direct sovereignty was advantageous for tax purposes; hence there were also struggles between sovereign and nobility, as well as rival claims among the aristocrats themselves. And of course there are disputes, the disputes of interest here, between the various villages and parishes about rights over pasturage. These disputes over the actual demarcation by field markers seem never to be finally resolved from one generation to another. At this level of governance, given fields that are not permanent, the suspicion endures that one's neighbors, whether in one's village or in the next parish or municipality, are moving the boundaries, centimeter by centimeter, in their own favor.

With the creation of the first truly centralized municipalities in the early mid-nineteenth century (the 1840's), the control over these mountain pasturages was definitively though gradually taken away from local villages and parishes and given over to municipal hands to administer from the municipal seat downvalley. But it was not

taken without a fight. Indeed, the municipal minutes for Aller for 1902 and 1903 detail a conflict between the villages of Felechosa and the municipal authorities concerning the passage of cattle from downriver parishes to the high pasturage of Braña in Puerto de San Isidro.¹⁵ In both years villagers argue that pasturage is theirs alone, and they seek to block the passage of other cattle. Even the mayor is insulted and threatened when he makes a visit of inspection. Women and children throw mud, manure, and sticks at him. Finally, a detachment of the Civil Guard is established in the village to prevent further disorder and to guarantee safe passage for downriver cattle.

By the end of the nineteenth century, of course, there had also been some privatization of pasturage in the puerto because church lands and some seignorial holdings held there had been purchased in the disentailments of the 1830's and 1840's (called Mendizabel) and the 1860's and 1870's (called Madóz). The purchases and consequent enclosure of fields, aimed toward rationalized land use, had also acted to keep villagers from exercising their old privileges of pasturage and usufruct at a minimal fee and fed the resentment that erupted in the unrest of 1902-3. The final chapter in the history of Puerto de San Isidro began in the 1970's, when the province of León began to develop a ski resort in its half of the pass and the municipality of Aller then began to sell plots of ground for building private mountain vacation houses.

What, given this history, can we say about the puerto as a symbol through time? Let us take into account the meaning of the term itself: port or harbor, that is, a place of coming in and going out. That the word is used for a mountain pass is commented on by Asturians themselves and other Spaniards. For the fact that a mountain pass and an ocean port carry the same name suggests to the villagers that when one is adrift in the mountains in a dense fog, it is the puerto that will lead one home, to harbor.

But I want to go beyond that folk meaning to suggest that the puerto, like any harbor, is a boundary place where one can pass into a new dispensation. Of course, more information than is obtained by a review of the usufruct claims over pasturage is needed to understand that meaning. It is necessary to understand how, in a lifeway of semi-transhumance, removal to a summerlong residence in the cabañas

¹⁵ Libro de Actas, Ayuntamiento de Aller, Asuntos Especiales, Caja 1860, Asunto 26. See particularly the Sesiones del Pleno of May 23, 1901; May 31, 1901; May 16, 1902; Aug. 8, 1902; Dec. 16, 1902; May 2, 1903; July 25, 1903; Aug. 16, 1903.

was a revitalizing change. One left the compressions of village life in the narrow valleys for life in the scattered *cabañas* of the wide open uplands, for a more relaxed life, free of the rancorous rub of the village. It was an easily romanticized life more directly keyed to the peaceable, ruminating rhythms of the cattle themselves—a life of cheese making, spinning, long evenings of storytelling around hearth fires, courtship. Whole families lived together in close quarters with the animals and slept together in the large *cabaña* beds. So the *puerto* life did offer a new dispensation and did represent qualities of life that the village could not offer. Nowadays, to be sure, villagers, though they may still keep cattle, rarely go to the *puerto* for those extended revitalizing stays. They have become almost entirely village oriented, and increasingly the *puerto* has come to be the playground of the middle classes and the well-to-do, themselves seeking revitalization from urban lives. It has increasingly become a leisure land for those who can afford it.

The boundary disputes over pasturage rights, then, have made the *puerto* a frontier between the autochthony of local life and those larger forces, seignorial, provincial, municipal, and state, that would intrude upon it and seek to appropriate it. So the *puerto* represents at once the autochthony of the pastoral lifeway, the dispensation that lies in transhumance, and the perennial threats to autochthony that would alienate it and make it into something controlled by other hegemonic forces.

Alienation, indeed, has taken place since the civil war (1939), for a changing economy has brought a shift in village life from a dependence on cattle to a dependence on tourism. Families that used to move back and forth between the two dispensations of village life and pastoral transhumance, between winter houses and summer *cabañas*, have opened bars and stores to cater to the tourists now going to the *puerto*. They are thus held in the perpetual responsibility of storekeepers to their clients—clients who have insinuated the needs of the resort world into the villagers' ancient claim on those high mountain harbors for their cattle and for themselves.

Circumstances Alter Cases: History and the New Science in Anthropology

I have made a point of including facsimiles of some of the archival documents pertaining to the artifacts and arenas scrutinized here.

These documents have a special—indeed symbolic—meaning for Asturian country people, who often treasure copies in trunks and safe-deposit boxes because they testify to former rights and privileges won or defended and to property inherited.

But they also have symbolic meaning for anthropologists—at least anthropologists like myself who have moved from the study of non-literate African societies with minimal archives to a rural Western European society awash in unconsulted documents at the parish level, not to mention all the administrative documents of the sometimes negligent, sometimes encompassing, state. Documents alter the circumstances of fieldwork and make the fieldworkers aware of the deep roots of their case studies. Documents recast fieldwork from a descriptive and conditional into a reflective and subjunctive mode, for they can never all be consulted, and the vast majority are subject to variable interpretation. So the documents symbolize the inescapability of the subjunctive mode in fieldwork among European country men and women. They symbolize the way that introducing deep time into case histories alters one's view of one's subjects.

Raising the question of the shift in research from nonliterate African societies to rural European societies rich in religious and administrative archives points up one further difference: The African societies all experienced the impact of the more or less sudden arrival of colonialism. Indeed, their attempt to maintain traditional integrities and viable boundaries in the face of this imposed and destabilizing dispensation is of great interest (see Fernandez 1982, 1978). The Asturian mountain villages did not experience any such changes of dispensation so drastic as the imposition of Pax Britannica or Pax Gallica.

Thus I have concentrated here on symbolic arenas—houses and dooryards, fields subject to *derrota*, mountain meadows and passes—and their symbolic accoutrements—keys and locks, gates and field markers—which have been part of the structure of daily life and daily routine for a very long time. I have examined the changing dispensations at a microlevel as villagers were involved in the perennial shifting back and forth between street and house, between neighborhood corral and private house and dooryard, between public and communal pasture and pasture “closed over against itself” by private interests and between parochial grazing rights and the municipal, provincial, seignorial, and state uses of the upland meadows. The documents indicate that the parameters of these microshifts of arena

and struggles over them are of a *longue durée*, to use Braudel's term. Indeed, in the first years of our research, particularly our reconnaissance in these villages in the mid-1960's, most villagers were, in respect to material life, still living in that condition of "inflexibility, inertia, and slow motion," of "autonomy" vis-à-vis the larger world, of which Braudel speaks. Of course he also speaks, in the same breath, of two worlds side by side, of a "market oriented economy and an expanding capitalism [spreading out] and gradually creating and prefiguring the very world in which we live" (Braudel 1977: 5).

So although there is something perennial and durable in our archive materials, surely at the microlevel there is also the insidious working away of other ideas and other structures of relationship that have brought significant change over the centuries—the change of rationalization and privatization—to these villagers. This working away has been particularly rapid in the last several decades.¹⁶ It is the symbolics of this change that we have also sought to address. For it is in the working out in the political economy of this "great idea" of rationalization and privatization that the symbols discussed here, however perennial in one sense, have inevitably been shaped. For the mountain vacation-home owner the field marker is the same kind of boundary maintenance entity as for the cattle keeper, yet different. It symbolizes personal more than communal rights of pasturage.

Insisting on sameness in difference recognizes how often social scientists end up with arguments of the *plus ça change* variety. Here I simply want to affirm that in the study of cultural evolution we have to see things, that is, symbols, as working at different levels—specific and general perhaps—and that if we do so, there is, at once, something perennial and something dynamic, something opening up and something closing down over time, in our materials. For men and women, wherever they are studied, both understand and do not understand, and their lives are made up of the dynamic of such paradoxical states. In fact, revitalization processes themselves are based upon such paradoxes.

¹⁶ See Susan Harding's study of Ibiaca (1984), in which she shows how insidiously and yet rapidly the Francoist political economy of the 1960's and early 1970's created a much different life world for villagers by the "invisible hand" of market capitalism than that of their former peasant agriculture.

Open Fields and Dead Hands

There is a larger context for this symbolism of open and closed fields. Spain, though more isolated, was no different from any other part of Europe in respect to the ideas of rationalized agriculture that, for example, accompanied, if not led to, the enclosure movement in England (see Fernandez 1981). In Spain, however, these Enlightenment ideas arrived later and only began to be expressed in the late eighteenth century by statesmen, "los Ilustrados," like the Asturian Melchor G. Jovellanos.¹⁷ If Jovellanos symbolized the land tenure and agricultural practices of the Old Regime with the synecdochic "dead hands," so Marx, in an opposite vein, chose "enclosure" as a classic illustration—can I say symbol?—of the privatization process by which the exploitive capitalist ethos imposed itself upon the countryside, divorcing the producer from the means of production and eradicating the more tolerant, if not more generous, balance of private rights and community obligations that had prevailed there.¹⁸ Indeed, chapter 27 of *Capital*, "Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land," is, in my judgment, the most expressive, not to say symbolic, part of the work.¹⁹

If, for Marx, enclosure came to stand for the classic and most representative form of expropriation and accumulation, so in Spain disentanglement and its offshoots, such as the suppression of *derrota*, has, at least for the intellectual elite, come to stand for, to symbolize, those fundamentally preoccupying changes in the countryside that, in some

¹⁷ See Jovellanos 1753. The nub of the argument is "individual interest is the first tool of agricultural prosperity" (p. 163).

¹⁸ "To understand its march [the transformation of feudal exploitation into capitalist exploitation] we need not go back very far. In the history of primitive accumulation all revolutions are epoch making that act as levers for the capitalist class in the course of formation, but above all, those movements when great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence and hurled as free and 'unattached' proletarians on the labour market. The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant from the soil, is the basis of the whole process" (Marx 1946: 787).

¹⁹ "The spoliation of the churches' property, the fraudulent alienation of the State domains, the robbery of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property, and its transformation into modern private property under circumstances of reckless terrorism, were just so many idyllic methods of primitive accumulation. They conquered the field for capitalistic agriculture, made the soil part and parcel of capital, and created for the town industries the necessary supply of a 'free' and outlawed proletariat" (Marx 1946: 805).

views, led to its necessary rationalization and, in other views, to the drastic loss of the moral community. There has thus been a long debate in Spain about disentanglement and the attendant privatization of real property, with the figure of Joaquín Costa (1902) being the classic antagonist of the iniquities of that privatization if Jovellanos is the classic protagonist. But in historiographic terms that is little different from the debate about enclosure in England between those such as the Hammonds, who in *The Village Labourer* (1911) eloquently espoused the essentials of Marx's views, and a succession of others who have taken revisionist views. Michael Turner has identified three phases in English historiography of the enclosure movement, from Marxist pessimism about the results of enclosure, to revisionist optimism, to the present counterrevisionism (1984: 12–15). In all these studies open fields have a primordial symbolic quality.

To localize these large-scale historical matters and make them more pertinent, let me mention here a series of interviews I had with a former (1940's and 1950's) secretary of the municipality of Aller, Benjamin García Álvarez (interviews that would have eventuated in a life history had he not died). He was the secretary who contributed the white paper on *jus fruendi* to the municipal council in the case of Rogelia Lobo Baizán of the Paramo of Villar. He was a conservative by temper and conviction, though not a Falangist or a Francoist.

Thematic and recurrent in our discussions was his regret over the loss of community in the various parishes and villages of Aller. As a secretary of the municipality for many years, the principal functionary in charge of the administration of its various villages, he knew that lack of community only too well. He blamed Spanish decadence upon it, since a strong state cannot be built on such weak foundations. Although a civil administrator himself, whose very job was created by the municipal reforms and municipal centralization of the nineteenth century, he felt that the reforms had only compounded the exaggerated individualism and loss of collective identity in village and parish produced by the disentanglements of that century. As was typical of his sort of conservative, he blamed the Cádiz Parliament of 1812 and the French-influenced liberalism of the period that led to the reforms. The reforms, by removing the economic role of the church in local life, had abolished the moral community that the church and seignorial obligation had created at that level through their power to instill a sense

of disciplined and responsible hierarchy.²⁰ As a consequence, the communities had lost the ability to manage their own affairs, while their inertia made management from the municipal center very difficult.

The former secretary was also alert to the issue of symbolism and frequently referred to the church's use of symbols to instill respect in country people for the ultimate values of this life and the next. With disentanglement the church lost, in his view, its symbolic power over the imaginations of many of its rural parishioners. A preoccupation with sheer acquisitiveness followed. García Álvarez had reflected also on the "dead hands" metaphor and argued its inappropriateness. Jovellanos was wrong. It was not the church that had dead hands, he said, but those who can work only for themselves and who do not know how to work for their community.

Symbol Formation and Human Relatedness in a Rural Milieu

Only a rare villager knows enough of the history of disentanglement to take a position on it or would, like García Álvarez himself, debate the aptness of the "dead hands" metaphor.²¹ Nevertheless, the way that the accompaniments of enclosure or disentanglement, whether open fields, field gates, or field markers, are formed into symbols and come to have highly charged associations is essentially no different for villager, historiographer, or administrator. Perhaps the only difference lies in the fact that the historiographer, ensconced in an office or archive, will have no direct tactile or visual experience of a field gate or a field marker—will never have propped the one open or nudged the other over a centimeter. But the main contested currents of Western European history, about which the historiographer or the political economist debates and parts of which have come to symbolize those currents and those debates, have their resonance, as I have tried to show, in this rural world of meaning.

²⁰ García Álvarez's preoccupations led him to collect village Ordenanzas drawn up previous to municipal reorganization and centralization. These, in his view, testified to the capacity for local self-rule before disentanglement. See note 9 for reference to his collection of Ordenanzas.

²¹ I am speaking about villagers who have maintained their residence in the village. Asturian mountain villages and towns have regularly produced members of the province's and the nation's educated elite, including García Álvarez himself.

I have tried to show how in contested milieu—milieu of social interactions, in which parties are in amiable or acrimonious contest—certain accompaniments that are a part of the contested whole (keys and field markers) or the whole itself (houses and puertos) will come to stand for that contest. They will come to be invested with the tension of significant differences, with the ongoing negotiation of human relatedness in that milieu. They will come to be an expression of that contest.

Such observations need axioms! I take as primordial and beyond contest in the revitalization theory I have in mind,²² first, that human relations come in and out of contest; that is to say, people pass from routine states, which are more or less well organized and efficacious for everyday purposes and projects, to states in which they are fractious and frustrated and increasingly aware of differences in respect to such things as the division of labor (sexual and otherwise), modes of production, or distribution of surpluses. Second, the most often contested questions are (1) questions of use rights over things and people, which is to say, contest over primordial and pronomial questions of what is mine and yours, ours and theirs, yours and mine and his, and (2) related questions of confinement and exclusion or enclosure, that is, questions in the broadest sense having to do with what is within our (mine or yours, or mine and yours) sphere of use rights and what is beyond it. Third, in such contested situations, certain arenas or objects can be seen to be the focus of these elemental contests and hence become symbolic, that is, expressive of them in the subsequent revitalization scenarios, the practical culture-changing activities that such human contest produces. Fourth, these symbols are not simply expressive or representative of the contests but have a life of their own and thus influence the situation of action in which they arise.

In a sense, all of Western European history has long been preoccupied with questions of enclosure. In this paper I have sought to identify objects and arenas in the rural milieu that have come to represent aspects of this prolonged contest. I have sought to study these symbols, and changes in their weighting, in increasingly wider social and political networks: keys within the framework of the relation be-

²²That would be A. F. C. Wallace's (1957) revitalization theory grounded in the vicissitudes of pronouns as played out in the predicative process by means of tropes. See Fernandez 1986.

tween the sexes and the dispensation that the one has to offer the other; houses in their dialogue with the street and within the framework of the inheritance dilemmas of extended family relations; dooryards within the framework of agitated neighborhood life; field gates within the framework of acrimony between village neighborhoods and between villages; field markers, mountain meadows, and passes within the framework of interparish and intermunicipal disputes about grazing rights. The study of symbols over time, therefore, is directly related to the study of the vicissitudes of contest in human relationships. Symbols, whether dream symbols or political symbols, are formed out of that problematic and come to stand for it as a way of thinking about it and managing the threats to order implicit in it.

Cycles of Revitalization and the Parameters of Enclosure

Two words have recurred here: dispensation and degeneration. Dispensation has preoccupied us, in part, because the symbols addressed—keys, dooryards, field gates, field markers, and mountain passes—not only symbolize contested arenas but are all liminal symbols of passage from one state of being, one dispensation, to another. But dispensation has been a key word here also because in the revitalization scenario generated by human contest there so often arises the question of new dispensations and old dispensations, of redemption by radical restoration or by radical eradication. In Spain the struggle over dispensations, the struggle over redemption, has been particularly acute, as is especially seen in the rhetoric of the civil war and the subsequent repression of the late 1930's (*depuración* in Spanish).

The word dispensation is often accompanied by the word degeneration, for which it is seen to be an antidote. It has been frequently used in Spain as part of the literature and general preoccupation with Spanish decline. It is in use in the villages as well, although with parochial and not national meaning, where collapsing great houses are bought by suddenly affluent country people and are then filled with acrimonious contest over inheritance, and where struggles over the public and the private and over usufruct have convinced many villagers that their life in community is "muy degenerado" in comparison with former times.

This sense of the degeneration of community inevitably invests with that meaning the symbols scrutinized here. Most were at that point in the revitalization cycle in which, rather than standing for access to a new dispensation, they remind many villagers of loss in the quality of life and of loss in the richness in their meaning world. Of course some villagers, whose views I have not presented, have responded with alacrity and to their benefit to the world that rationalization and privatization have opened to them. As storekeepers or barkeepers, as small entrepreneurs, they have tied themselves profitably to the modern world and the opportunities that trends like tourism make available. They find themselves optimistically riding the up phases of a cycle and do not feel themselves or their situation to be in decline. The new dispensation shines upon them. It is a time of "fat cows" (*vacas gordas*). These villagers understand how to reach out and take in and use the things that a rationalized, privatized world offers to them. But for the pastoralists and for the pastoralists-turned-miners who are the bulk of the parish population, the situation is often enough one of a dimming dispensation, of "thin cows." And this is brought to mind whenever they think about, or dream about, keys and houses, dooryards or field gates, field markers or high-altitude meadows and passes. They feel locked out and/or locked in, and they are left to make the world out of themselves, transforming themselves into those things of their world discussed here.

I use the term cycle both because I want to tie the idea of symbols through time into revitalization theory and also because I have Vico's "new science" in mind, with its emphasis not only on reflexive historiography but also upon the cycles of poetic wisdom and reason in history—cycles, that is (and to recall the epigraph), of reaching out and taking in or of turning in and making things out of oneself and transforming oneself into them. In the end any of the observations on symbols through time must be made in relation to historical cycles of revitalization, always with the caution in mind that in this pluralistic, intercommunicated world in which Western Europeans live, even villagers of the smallest and most isolated hamlets will not be perfectly "coeval," finding themselves in the same time and place upon the cycle.²³ They will find themselves in different figurative times

²³ See Johannes Fabian's (1983) discussion of the challenge of coevality to truly intersubjective anthropological fieldwork. His argument presumes that one's informants are coeval among themselves.

and places vis-à-vis the major symbols of their lives. For some the cows are fat, and for others thin. But for all, whatever the cows' transitory weight, the same symbols have persisted for hundreds of years.

Acknowledgments

This research has been supported by grants from the National Science Foundation and the Spanish–North American Joint Committee administered by the Fulbright Program. As always I am grateful to Renate Lellep Fernandez for supplying me with data and insights from her rich ethnographic knowledge of these Asturian mountain valleys and their society and culture. I have been fortunate also in working and consulting with students, now colleagues, exceptionally well informed about rural Spain: Ruth Behar, Richard Detweiler, David Frye, John Holmquist, Peter Sahlins, and Joseba Zulaika. This is a version of a paper presented at the Wenner-Gren conference "Symbolism Through Time," in January 1986 in Fez, Morocco. Let me express my gratitude to Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney for organizing the conference and especially for her important paper "Phases in Human Perception/Conception/Symbolization Processes" (1981), which raises in a trenchant and original way this issue of symbols through time.